

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 281155Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2759

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 0662

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, NS

SUBJ: NO ELECTIONS IN 1976

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER ARRON DECLARED IN PARLIAMENT JULY 26 THAT HE SAW NO NECESSITY TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AT THIS TIME AND THAT TECHNICAL PROBLEMS PREVENT THE HOLDING OF ELECTIONS AT LEAST THROUGH THE END OF THIS YEAR. PARLIAMENT SEUSEQUENTLY REJECTED AN OPPOSITION-SPONSORED MOTION AFFIRMING THAT ARRON HAD IN FACT PROMISED ELECTIONS WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS AFTER SURINAM'S INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION FROM DISSIDENT OPPOSITION MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT GEORGE HINDORI, PRIME MINISTER HENCK ARRON APPEARED IN PARLIAMENT JULY 26 TO DEFEND HIS GOVERNMENT'S DECISION NOT TO HOLD EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, WHICH ACCORDING TO SURINAM'S CONSTITUTION MUST BE HELD BY NOVEMBER 1977. PREVIOUSLY, IN A JULY 5 MEETING WITH OPPOSITION LEADER JAGGERNATH LACHMON, ARRON HAD AGREED TO TURN OVER TO PARLIAMENT DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION OF EARLY ELECTIONS AND WHETHER HE HAD PROMISED ELECTIONS WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS OF SURINAM'S INDEPENDENCE.

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3. ARRON DECLARED HE SAW NO NECESSITY TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AT THIS TIME, AN ACTION WHICH COULD BE TAKEN ONLY WHEN COMPELLING REASONS EXIST. HE THOUGHT DISSOLUTION NOW WOULD BE SENSELESS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE EIGHT MONTHS WHICH WERE AT THE CENTER OF THE CONTROVERSY HAVE ALREADY PASSED. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAD, AS HE HAD INTENDED, TURNED THE MATTER OVER FOR DISCUSSION BY THE PARTIES AND FOR JUDGMENT BY PARLIAMENT.

4. IN ADDITION, ARRON CONTINUED, THE HOLDING OF ELECTIONS WOULD BE DIFFICULT AT PRESENT. FOREMOST AMONG THESE DIFFICULTIES IS THE COMPILATION OF A VOTERS' LIST, A PROCESS COMPLICATED BY THE UNCERTAIN NATIONALITY OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS. SINCE AN INDEPENDENT ELECTION COMMISSION MUST ALSO STILL BE SET UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION, ARRON CONCLUDED, ELECTIONS CANNOT BE HELD THIS YEAR.

5. ARRON DISCOUNTED CHARGES MADE BY SOME MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT THAT THE NETHERLANDS WOULD WITHHOLD DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND THAT FOREIGN INVESTORS, QUESTIONING THE GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY, WOULD STAY OUT OF SURINAM IF ELECTIONS WERE NOT HELD WITHIN THE EIGHT-MONTH PERIOD. IN ADDITION, HE BELIEVED THAT SURINAMERS ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO GO TO THE POLLS AND THAT THE VOTERS ARE IN HARMONY WITH THOSE THEY HAVE ELECTED.

6. IN RESPONSE TO ARRON'S ANSWER, THE OPPOSITION VHP PARTY INTRODUCED A MOTION IN PARLIAMENT DECLARING THAT ARRON HAD IN FACT STATED THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS OF NOVEMBER 19, 1975, THE DATE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION AT WHICH ARRON'S CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENT WAS MADE. OPPOSITION HIGHLIGHTED THEIR CAONSET LAST NOVEMBER TO APPROVAL OF SURINAM'S CONSTITUTION AS EVIDENCE OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT ELECTIONS HAD BEEN PROMISED WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS AND ASSERTED THAT EVERYONE UNDERSTOOD ARRON AS HAVING SAID ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD WITHIN THAT TIME PERIOD. THE OPPOSITION'S MOTION WAS DEFEATED, AS EXPECTED, BY A VOTE OF 18-13. ZURHELLEN

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